

Literacy in Delaware County

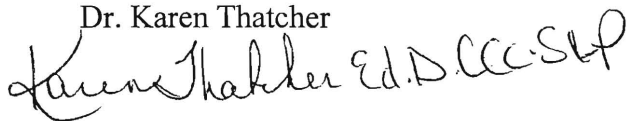
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor

Dr. Karen Thatcher

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Thatcher Ed.D. CCC-SLP". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

April 2013

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2013

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Abstract

Literacy forms the foundation upon which all learning is built; yet the statistics regarding the inadequacy of literacy in our nation are overwhelmingly unfortunate. Parents and caregivers should provide opportunities for learning about oral language and print beginning at birth to allow a child to develop literacy skills appropriately and to thrive throughout life. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) collaborate with parents and other professionals to identify and serve children who present atypical development in literacy proficiencies. As two speech-language pathology students at Ball State University, we researched literacy and its presentation and impact with specific regard to the birth to preschool age population in Delaware County, Indiana. We organized Baby Steps, a 5K Run/Walk, from which we used the proceeds to purchase used books we donated to the families at Head Start of Delaware County, the families at A Better Way in Muncie, Indiana, and the Ball State University Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic in Muncie, Indiana. Finally, we read with first through third graders at an after-school program at the Maring-Hunt Library in Muncie, Indiana to put our acquired knowledge to use. Through fundraising, book donations, and reading with children in the Delaware County area, our mission was to share the knowledge we gained by bringing awareness of the importance of literacy to the community.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Audrey Van Acker/Alaina Hartman, my co-author, for working with me throughout the entire project. I could not have accomplished such great things without her ideas, perseverance, and hard work. I learned a lot from our teamwork experience.

I would like to thank Dr. Karen Thatcher for advising me throughout the course of this project.

I would like to thank Laurie Habich for meeting with me and making it possible for me to give a book to each child in the Head Start Program.

I would like to thank the Head Start of Delaware County for allowing me to distribute the books and spend time with the children.

I would like to thank all of my family and friends for supporting and encouraging me throughout this thesis endeavor.

I would like to thank all of my previous and current professors and clinic supervisors in the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at Ball State University for teaching me about the important role of a speech-language pathologist in regards to literacy.

I would like to thank the many businesses who helped to make the raffle prizes and post-race food possible.

I would like to thank all of the people who made children's book donations and the volunteers and participants at our Baby Steps 5K for their generous support of our thesis work and cause.

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“The What?”, Some “So What?”, and an Introduction to the “And Now What?”

In *Singular's Pocket Dictionary of Speech-Language Pathology*, Singh & Kent defined literacy as the “ability to read and communicate through written language” (2000). As stated by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA] (2013b), the National Literacy Act of 1991 defined literacy as “an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.” Singh and Kent defined literacy, but the definition provided by the National Literacy Act of 1991 includes written and oral language *and* reveals the implications of literacy in daily life. Consideration of these meaningful implications places a greater value on literacy and serves as the grounds for our thesis.

According to ASHA (2001), emergent literacy is the period during which a child's awareness of print and comprehension of how print is used in day-to-day life develop. During the emergent literacy stage, a child gains a fundamental understanding of print that must develop prior to learning how to read and write. Roth, Paul, and Pierotti (2006) explained that “emergent literacy” begins at birth and involves interacting with print in day-to-day activities—not only in reading with a parent or caregiver but also seeing lists, street signs and posted words; recognizing the alphabet letters; acknowledging rhyming sounds; and simply hearing speech. Roth et al. stated that talking and listening during the preschool-age years create significant opportunity for literacy development because spoken language is closely connected with literacy. In fact, Roth et al reported a significant difference in literacy learning levels of children who have stronger versus weaker oral language skills (2006). Similarly, the National Early Literacy

Panel (NELP), a team summoned by the National Institute for Literacy to research and report findings regarding literacy education for preschoolers and kindergartners, attested that phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and oral language are significant in the development of literacy.

ASHA stated that one out of every five school-aged children in the United States struggle with reading and that most people who struggle with reading have struggled or still struggle with oral language (ASHA, 2013b). The position statement written by ASHA's Ad Hoc Committee on Reading and Written Language Disorders titled "Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists Related to Reading and Writing in Children and Adolescents" confirmed the significant relationship between oral language and literacy:

...spoken and written language have a reciprocal relationship, such that each builds on the other to result in general language competence, starting early and continuing through childhood into adulthood; children with spoken language problems frequently have difficulty learning to read and write, and children with reading and writing problems frequently have difficulty with spoken language; instruction in spoken language can result in growth in written language; and instruction in written language can result in growth in spoken language. (as cited in Spracher, 2000)

One specific skill that links oral language with reading and writing is phonological awareness. Roth et al. defined phonological awareness as "the recognition that words are made up of separate speech sounds" and provide the example of the three sounds /d/, /ɔ/, and /g/ ("d," "aw," and "g") that make up the word "dog" (2006). With a parent's help, phonological awareness is part of a child's natural development; for example in rhyming words (i.e. "tall" and "fall"), alliteration (i.e. "Bob banged his boots."), and the isolation of sounds (/b/ (the "b" sound) starts

the word “ball”). Children learn to “segment” words into sounds and then eventually learn to “map” sounds out using representative letters—a skill that is known to be a precursor for reading and writing (Roth et al., 2006). ASHA suggested that a child’s difficulty with word decoding, or “print-to-speech,” tasks and spelling, or “speech-to-print” tasks emphasizes the fact that a child’s phonetic awareness coincides with a child’s abilities to read and write (American, 2001). Thus, oral language and phonological awareness skills have significant correlation with reading and writing abilities (Roth et al., 2006).

It is important for adults to be familiar with typical literacy developmental milestones in order to recognize and monitor the literacy development of children. This aids in early identification of literacy problems and early intervention. First Years (2010) compiled information from multiple sources into the document titled “Literacy Development: Ages and Stages.” This document states literacy developmental milestones including speaking, reading, and writing developments. According to First Years, literacy skills begin developing at birth and begin to be manifested at about six months of age. Between the ages of six and twelve months, a child should attend to pictures while the parent is reading, turn pages with some assistance from an adult, and be able to recognize familiar objects. By the ages of twelve to eighteen months a child should demonstrate proper book orientation—meaning a child should position a book right-side-up with the contents facing the correct direction; begin expressing his/her first words; and point to and name objects when asked. At eighteen to twenty-four months of age, a child begins to understand that printed words have meaning. During this stage a child will also begin to narrate familiar passages in books and will fill in the correct words when an adult purposely omits specific words of a text familiar to the child. When a child is between twenty-four and thirty-six months he/she typically begins understanding that the text on the pages is associated

with the pictures and that each story has a plot (First Years, 2010). Corresponding to the above-noted relationship between reading and oral language, it is during this twenty-four to thirty-six month period that a child begins to use sentences in spoken language. Once a child is three to four years of age he/she begins retelling familiar stories, learns to recognize letters, and spontaneously produces rhymes. Beginning at this stage, a child's scribbling looks more like printed text—a development that supports the correlation between writing and the reading skill of beginning to recognize letters. At four to five years of age, a child begins segmenting and counting the syllables in words, trying to spell words he/she hears, and learns to write his/her own name. Between the ages of five and seven years, a child typically begins reading on his/her own and begins to understand rules of spelling. Age nine marks the typical start of abstract thinking and comprehension of different points of view (First Years, 2010). Typical literacy development as stated by First Years (2010) and as noted above should be considered with the general understanding that each child is distinct and may appropriately manifest literacy development in a slightly faster or slower manner.

The statistics recognizing the prime value of literacy seem ceaseless. Fitzgerald (2012) wrote about the results of a research study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania that involved the analysis of the reading scores of 12,339 seventh grade girls and records of these girls giving birth following the reading test. The study revealed that girls with “less-than-average reading levels were two and a half times more likely to give birth” as a young teenager (Fitzgerald, 2012).

Gifford reported in her 2007 article titled “National Endowment for the Arts Announces New Reading Study,” about the National Endowment for the Arts's (NEA's) most recent publication, “To Read or Not To Read: A Question of National Consequence,” which examines

reading habits of Americans. Gifford stated key findings from the NEA's publication: Teens and young adults in the United States are not reading as much in frequency and duration; for those aged 15 to 24 years, an average of seven minutes is spent leisurely reading compared to about two hours spent watching television each day; and employers judge high school graduates to be deficient in reading comprehension skills (Gifford, 2007).

Raising a Reader Massachusetts (Raising a Reader MA) is an organization in Boston that works with other programs, including Head Start, in order to assist "families of young children (ages 0-5) develop, practice, and maintain habits of reading together at home." Raising a Reader MA states that their evidence-based reasoning is that "the single most significant factor influencing a child's lifelong achievement is being regularly read to by their parents and adult caregivers before starting kindergarten" (Raising, n.d.). According to "The Brains Have It: Neuroscience Research and Raising a Reader MA," Elijah explained a research study regarding differences in the brains of mice that were "exposed to stimuli during their upbringing" in contrast to mice that were isolated when 21 days old. The brains of these two groups of mice differed the most in the cortex area—where memory and language are managed. In addition, Elijah reported about a separate study in which Martha Farah, a neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania, worked on for 20 years. Farah concluded:

Cognitive stimulation at age four, in the form of books in the home, educational toys, access to instruments, and the level of nurturing by the parent was the key indicator of cortex development and future academic performance in late-teen years. (Elijah, 2012)

Elijah compared the mice that were "exposed to stimuli" and the four year olds who experienced "cognitive stimulation" to families who partake in Raising a Reader MA Dialogic Reading. Elijah claimed that the Dialogic Reading strategies, which involve dialogue between a parent and

child regarding a text, train the brain cortex. The image provided (see page i) is not an MRI of a child in Raising a Reader MA, but Elijah provided the image in his article to demonstrate that reading is an important part of brain maturity (Elijah, 2012).

In her ASHA document titled, “Communication Facts: Special Populations: Literacy 2008,” Castrogiovanni listed statistics that relate to literacy: The illiteracy in the United States, is a “critical economical and healthcare problem;” about 44 million adults do not have sufficient enough literacy skills to read a food label or application instructions; and 25-28% of adults “can perform complex tasks such as comparing, contrasting, and integrating pieces of information, but they are usually unable to perform higher level reading and problem-solving skills.”

According to ASHA, over one-third of fourth graders and almost 70% of fourth graders in “low-income urban schools” rank below the appropriate reading level. ASHA further stated that if not reading fluently by fourth grade, children will present difficulty reading in adulthood. As suggested by ASHA, these statistics necessitate the need for early identification and intervention of reading difficulty presented by children (ASHA, 2013b).

In Spracher’s article titled “Learning About Literacy: SLPs Play Key Role in Reading, Writing,” which was published in *The ASHA Leader* (2000), she stated warning signs that would suggest that a child will struggle with reading and writing, including: “persistent baby talk, absence of interest in or appreciation for nursery rhymes or shared book reading, difficulty understanding simple directions, difficulty learning (or remembering) names of letters, [and] failure to recognize or identify letters in the child’s own name.” Spracher also stated that it is important to identify a child at risk of not acquiring literacy skills “early in the preschool period.” Additional factors that would suggest a child is more at risk for delayed learning of literacy skills, include: physical and mental difficulties such as premature birth, fetal alcohol

syndrome, chronic ear infections, autism spectrum, difficulty reading and writing in preschool, and a poor home upbringing (Spracher, 2000).

ASHA estimated that about 75% of students who have dropped out of school demonstrate reading difficulty and more than 50% of adolescent and young adult criminals demonstrate reading difficulty (2013b). According to an article in *The New York Times* titled “Hire That Reading Czar,” certain states use reading test scores of third graders to approximate the number of future prison inmates (Gillis, 2006). With such unfavorable statistics as these, educating the youth in pre-literacy and literacy skills should be a priority.

The significant correlation between reading competency and success in society demands action from parents and caregivers. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) evaluates 15-year-old students from over 70 countries in the subjects of mathematics, reading, and science, with a heavy emphasis on literacy in each subject area (OECD, n.d.). Results of the PISA 2009 revealed that when children in their first year of school were read to by their parents “every day or almost every day” or “once or twice a week,” they scored significantly better than students who were read to “once or twice a month” or “never or almost never.” PISA 2009 data results also indicated that when the test results of students of similar socioeconomic upbringings were compared, the children that had been read to by their parents scored an average of 14 points higher on the PISA test than their peers who had not been read to by their parents (Borgonovi, 2011).

NELP reported greater learning when the child was involved in the reading process by having to answer questions about the story (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013). This requires an adult to read with a child. Various studies have proved that reading with children is very beneficial to their language development. NELP stated three specific techniques an adult can use while

reading with a child that have been proved to have significant impact on language development: dialogic reading, word elaborations, and print referencing (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013).

Dialogic reading involves oral communication between an adult and child about the story being read and allows the child to actively participate in the literacy activity. In addition to the valuable adult-child interaction, the child's vocabulary and grammar skills are fostered. NELP suggested multiple strategies for an adult to guide dialogic reading: questions, cloze procedures, and text-to-life connections. Examples of types of questions an adult might ask include: "Wh" questions such as "Why?" or "When?", questions that require more than a one-word answer from the child, and questions that require the child to remember an event that occurred previously in the story. A cloze procedure is when an adult begins to say a sentence and stops without finishing so that the child can finish the sentence aloud. Text-to-life connections involve the adult connecting an event or vocabulary from the story being read with an event or occurrence in the child's life. After one of the three strategies is used, the adult should repeat the child's response and continue the cycle of "repeat," "recast," and "extend the child's contribution" to foster communication with the child (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013, p.122). Because the dialogic reading method relies on the adult, NELP stressed that the adult must follow the cycle in order to have significant results. NELP also stated that the dialogic reading method might not be advantageous for use when reading with a child who has a developmental disability (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013, p.123).

Word elaborations entail further discussion about words from a text. Positive results of word elaborations include an increased vocabulary and word usage of a child. Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) suggested that to implement word elaborations in reading with a child, an adult first should choose a book with an assortment of a few different, slightly advanced vocabulary

words. Then, when reading the book with the child, the adult leads the child in discussing the meaning of the words. The book is read multiple times, each time highlighting the vocabulary words and how they are used. The adult should also use the vocabulary words in the child's presence at other times throughout the day in order to foster in the child vocabulary knowledge and proper usage of the new words. Multiple studies have proved that repetitive elaboration on new vocabulary is much more effective for learning than merely being exposed to new vocabulary (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013, p.124). Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) noted that the ideal number of new vocabulary words and the most beneficial number of times an elaboration should be repeated while reading with a child has not yet been determined.

Print referencing means alluding to the print of a storybook verbally and nonverbally in order to make a child more interested and aware of the print and its context. Research has proved that most children do not focus on the text of a book, but rather the pictures. It is important, however, to reference the text of a book. Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) revealed three aspects of print referencing: targets, materials, and techniques (p. 125). Targets are what an adult alludes to—such as a particular letter, word, or even the way a title or caption is written. Materials are the ways the print is displayed—such as in a speech bubble or in a different font. Techniques suggested by Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) include finger tracking, or pointing to the words as they are read aloud, in order to maintain the child's attention to the print; making comments (For example: "I see "box" written on this page."); and asking questions (For example: Can you find the word "box" on this page?"). Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) revealed that just because a child has an increased attentiveness to the print of a storybook, the child does not necessarily maintain attention to the plot of the story. Nevertheless, paying attention to the print develops literacy skills and according to Piasta, Justice, McGinty, & Kaderavek (2012), the print knowledge has

proved to positively influence the child's reading level, as measured during the first grade (as cited by Shanahan and Lonigan, 2013, p.126).

A parent or caretaker of a child significantly impacts a child's literacy development. Throughout each day, a parent can and should introduce literacy into his/her child's life and just as important, a parent can and should make literacy fun for his/her child. Spracher (2000) lists multiple methods for a parent to implement in order to allow a child to practice his/her literacy skills, including: having conversations with the child; naming objects, people and happenings in the child's environment; repeating and expanding on the child's utterances; asking the child questions and answering the child's questions; calling attention to print on signs and packaging; introducing the child to new situations and teaching the child new vocabulary words that correspond to the new setting; singing nursery rhymes together; playing word and rhyming games together; reading stories, especially books that emphasize alliteration, rhyme, and sounds, together; rereading books together; print referencing; and encouraging the child to draw and then talk about his/her drawing. Teaching the child to recognize his/her own name is also important.

In their article titled "Access to Print in Low-Income and Middle-Income Communities: An Ecological Study of Four Neighborhoods," Neuman and Celano (2001) reported that literacy develops from interactions with and opportunities provided by a child's environment. While an understanding of how print works can be gained through exposure to print and signs, interactions with books, and exposure to other individuals engaged in literacy activities, Neuman and Celano stated that differences in access to print influences "the degree of familiarity with book language and the cognitive behaviors associated with reading." Four communities of varying socioeconomic classes were studied to draw conclusions about the availability of print resources within lower-class communities versus its availability in middle-class communities. Results

indicated that children had to work much harder to find a wide array of reading materials in poorer communities. In poorer communities it was much more difficult, if not impossible, for children to purchase books in local stores. Signs, which offer abundant opportunities for children to explore print even before they are able to read, were much less accessible to children in poor neighborhoods. Poorer neighborhoods also provided less conducive areas for people to read in the community as well as reduced exposure to books in public libraries, thus reducing the amount of exposure children have to literacy activities along with reducing access to books.

Neuman and Celano (2001) concluded:

children who lack exposure and experiences with print are less likely to be skilled at the initial acquisition process, less likely to become involved in reading-related activities, and less motivated to read, beginning the spiraling effect of the rich-get-richer, and the poor-get-poorer phenomenon.

Children are at high risk for not developing the skills necessary to read, write, listen, and speak when they have difficulty acquiring language skills. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are an important part of a collaborative team involving a child's family, teachers, and caregivers that works to develop individualized intervention programs for each child. As Spracher explained, SLPs use their familiarity of language development and language subsystems, including: pragmatics, semantics, syntax, phonology and morphology, to aid in the prevention, identification, assessment, and intervention of literacy difficulties (2000). An SLP can develop therapy goals and properly guide a child with phonological awareness or retrieval difficulties (Spracher, 2000).

The role of an SLP in regards to literacy has multiple facets as described by ASHA: preventing, identifying at-risk children, assessing, providing intervention, documenting

outcomes, developing programs, advocating for effective literacy practices, and advancing the knowledge base (American, 2013c). Prevention involves working with teachers and parents to encourage them and direct them in enhancing the literacy environment of children (American, 2013c). An SLP identifies at risk children with potential reading and writing difficulty by means of assessing a child's reading and writing skills. This is done by providing teachers with information to help with early recognition of language factors that lead to literacy difficulties, as well as using both formal (i.e. testing) and informal (i.e. observation and collaboration with teachers and parents) methods to assess a child. It is the responsibility of an SLP to provide intervention and promote language acquisition and emergent literacy in order to prevent written language deficits. Based on a child's developmentally appropriate needs, an SLP plays a key role in creating an intervention program that includes proper therapy goals for each child. The SLP must document the outcomes of direct intervention (American, 2001).

The role an SLP plays in identification of literacy problems in a child varies depending upon the age of the child. For older children, an SLP will not only educate other professionals on how to identify risk factors that may lead to literacy problems like they do with young children, but an SLP will also collaborate with a child's teacher and parents to properly assess a student to determine appropriate classroom modifications (American, 2001). Program development might involve an SLP initiating identification programs in a school. Serving as an advocate for literacy and enhancing knowledge of literacy and literacy development and practices through research are also important facets of an SLP's role because these facets can serve as a form of prevention (American, 2013c). ASHA stated that over 70% of teachers reported improved "pre-reading, reading, or reading comprehension skills" in students who have received services for speech and language (American, 2013a).

In “Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists With Respect to Reading and Writing in Children and Adolescents,” ASHA’s Ad Hoc Committee on Reading and Written Language Disorders wrote:

In many cases, the SLP’s role in prevention is largely a collaborative one, targeting language acquisition directly, while also assisting parents, day care providers, and early childhood educators to develop strategies and seek opportunities to provide many emergent literacy experiences with books and other forms of print. (American, 2001)

As two aspiring SLPs, the “And now what?” part of our project stemmed from the above statement by the Ad Hoc Committee on Reading and Written Language Disorders. We sought to “provide many emergent literacy experiences with books,” to the children of Head Start of Delaware County.

Under the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson and as a part of his “War on Poverty,” in 1965, Head Start was designed as a government-funded program to increase the competence of low-income children so that they were school-ready (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013). Head Start works to enhance the “social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families” (Indiana Family, n.d.). About 46% of Head Start children begin the program at 3 years of age or younger and the other 54% begin at four years of age (Shanahan and Lonigan, 2013, p.29).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) completed a study to determine the success of the Head Start Program. During a five-year time span, the DHHS collected information from two groups that totaled 4,667 children from various states. The experimental group consisted of children enrolled in a Head Start program. The control group

consisted of children who were eligible to enroll in Head Start but did not; however, some of these children attended other programs similar to Head Start. The children's progress was tested via direct assessments including the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition*, the "Oral Language Aptitude" and "Reading Aptitude" subtests of the *Woodcock-Johnson III*, the *Preschool Comprehensive Test of Phonological and Print Processing*, and the *McCarthy Draw-A-Design Task*, in addition to parent and teacher reports. The diagnostics were administered and the results were recorded while the children were in kindergarten and first grade. Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) reported the literacy related findings of the DHHS study. Results included greater achievements in the areas of language and literacy—specifically letter-word identification, spelling, vocabulary, letter naming, and emergent-literacy by the four year-old children who attended a Head Start program. The three-year old children who attended a Head Start program displayed more developed skills in vocabulary, letter-word identification, letter naming, elision, perceptual motor skills, prewriting, and emergent literacy (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013).

The affirmative results of the Head Start program study were weakened by the finding that in contrast to the significant advantages manifested by the four-year-olds, significant advantages were no longer apparent at the end of the first grade (U.S. Department, 2010). Rather than dwell on this weakening evidence, we choose to call attention to the fact that the study had not reversed. No significant advantages were apparent, but perhaps the Head Start program prevented these children from worse outcomes. While the advantages manifested by the children at the end of third grade were not statistically significant, this research study found that the parents of the children in Head Start programs described their children to have greater emerging literacy skills compared to the children in the study who did not participate in a Head Start

program (U.S. Department, 2010). This is significant because reading has a positive effect on a child's emergent literacy skills. An additional and valuable outcome stated by the Head Start Impact Study Final Report stated that within the last week, the children and parents who participated in a Head Start program were more likely to have read together than the children and parents who were part of the control group in the study (U.S. Department, 2010).

As of January 1, 2013, there were 15,963 children enrolled in Head Start programs in the state of Indiana (Indiana, 2013). In the Head Start program of Delaware County, of the 305 total Head Start families, 48 are a part of the Early Head Start program (children aged birth to three years) and 257 are in the Head Start program (preschool aged children). Although Early Head Start and Head Start are divided into separate categories of Head Start, they share the same building at the Head Start of Delaware County, located in Muncie, Indiana. Laurie Habich, Education/Disabilities Specialist at Head Start of Delaware County, served as our contact. When describing typical Head Start families, Habich said, "A lot of our families are in survival mode...[just trying] to get food on the table." She described the typical Head Start family and explained that when food is a top priority, literacy is hardly considered. Habich explained that the Head Start staff educates parents on the importance of literacy at parent meetings. And for the children, a librarian comes to Head Start once a year. Following a presentation by the librarian, all of the Head Start children go to the Maring-Hunt or Kennedy Library to be exposed to the library setting and to learn about what a library offers (L. Habich, personal communication, January 23, 2013).

"How much would receiving one book impact a Head Start family?" I asked. Habich replied that one book has the potential to encourage parent-child bonding time and literacy development for each child. She said that the hope is that the child enjoys the book, asks for a

parent to read it again, and then eventually the child will read it aloud. And “whether they’re reading correctly or not, they think they’re reading. And that’s the first step. That’s what we want,” Habich concluded (L. Habich, personal communication, January 23, 2013). The words: “Making a difference in the lives of families” are painted on the inside wall at the entrance of Head Start of Delaware County. We wanted to be a part of that difference.

The "And Now What?"

Every project has a beginning. What sometimes begins as a small project can quickly turn into something much larger than initially anticipated. Our thesis began as an idea between two speech-language pathology students who wanted to turn their passion about literacy into something beneficial to the community. We knew from the very beginning we wanted to incorporate our interest in literacy and its importance in the lives of young children with our passion for running into our thesis. After meeting with Dr. Emert, Associate Dean of the Honors College, to discuss the possibilities of where to go with this idea, we left his office with even more possibilities. We thought of having a relay race day for kids around Halloween. With our theme we compiled a list of different relay races, crafts, and stories that we could do with the children and their families. We wanted to invite children in the area and their parents to attend our fun day where we would divide the children into groups based on age. We would then move through the different stations and each activity would relate back to promoting literacy.

Discussing this with professors in the speech-language pathology and audiology department, we concluded it would be difficult to promote such an event and attendance may not be what we hoped for. So, we went back to the drawing board to determine another way to promote literacy within the community. After much thought, we decided that we wanted to host a fundraiser event in which all of the proceeds would go toward buying books for children. We knew we wanted to buy books for the children in the community that needed them, but we were unsure of which organization to work with to make this happen. The two of us created a list of all of the places within Delaware County that we could work with on our project, which included Ball Memorial Hospital, A Better Way, and Head Start. After meeting with our thesis supervisor, Dr. Karen

Thatcher, Ed.D., CCC-SLP, we narrowed our options down to a handful of organizations. We then contacted the different organizations on our list to determine which one would be the best to collaborate with. Alaina contacted Head Start, and upon talking with Laurie Habich from the Head Start Program, we became very excited to work with them on our thesis, especially after learning more about how they provide services to children in families of low socioeconomic status. Beginning with the families at Head Start, we hoped to bring awareness of the importance of literacy to Delaware County.

Knowing we wanted to raise money to buy books for the Head Start program, we began brainstorming ideas on how to raise money. With a common passion for running, we decided to host a 5k run/walk to raise the funds needed to purchase books. Alaina talked with Mrs. Habich about our ideas to host a benefit race and donate all of the books that we would purchase with the proceeds. Mrs. Habich told Alaina that the Head Start program was excited to work with us and told Alaina about an annual family reading night they had hosted for all of the families in the program. After talking about this with Mrs. Habich, we decided that we also wanted to help plan the reading night for the families of Head Start. With ideas of how to execute this plan running through our minds we sat in the library and constructed our proposal. We then took a written thesis proposal to Dr. Thatcher for approval, “see page ii”, who gave us the idea of also doing a reading event with the children who live in the Ball State University Apartments. From there we started to put all of our ideas into action.

Upon deciding to organize a race in which all of the proceeds would be used to purchase books for Head Start of Delaware County, we contacted Charles Scofield, Facilities Assignment Coordinator, about having the space on campus reserved. Prior to meeting with him in person we created a few options for starting locations and race routes. One venue Audrey looked into was

hosting the race on the Cardinal Greenway so we would not have to worry about traffic and the safety of the runners. After looking into this option we decided the high insurance fee required for hosting events on the Greenway was out of our budget, so we devised other plans in which the entire race was held on campus. We developed two different race routes that took place on campus to ensure we could find an available area on campus to reserve. After presenting our idea to Mr. Scofield, we decided to begin the race at the University Green. With the help of Mr. Scofield we contacted Lawrence Cistrelli, Jr. JD, MBA, CPCU, HIA, Director of Risk Management at Ball State University, who helped us create a waiver for the participants, “see page iii.” Many questions arose which Mr. Scofield helped us with, such as if we needed first aid on site, what kind of course patrol was needed at intersections, which restrooms should we direct participants to, etc. Upon securing the date and time of the event, we then created a list of businesses to solicit donations for a raffle to be held at the race. Alaina also created an email account, babysteps5k@gmail.com, specifically for the race so that businesses and participants could email us with their questions. After Audrey created a flyer for the race and typed up a donation request letter, “see pages iv and v”, respectively, we drove to various businesses throughout Muncie to solicit and collect donations. Approximately two weeks after handing out the donation request letters, we did follow-ups with all of the businesses that wanted us to check back with them. While out following up with the businesses, we also stopped at the Kennedy Library where we posted a flyer about the race.

Over the course of a couple weeks and many visits to various businesses, both by car and bicycle, all of the donation request letters were passed out to local businesses. We then began to work on advertising our event. We reserved a table in the Atrium for two days from eleven to one o’clock in the afternoon to advertise the 5k, “see page vi.” Alaina created a poster with

information about the race, information about Head Start, and statistics relating to the importance of literacy, “see pages vii - x.” Alaina also created a flyer with the event information on it to pass out to students as they entered and exited the Atrium, “see page xi.” In addition to advertising the race at the Atrium, Audrey also announced the race during Ball State University’s chapter of the National Speech-Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) general assembly meeting to see if anyone would be interested in participating or volunteering. Alaina sent an email to all of the professors in the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology department to have them announce the 5k to all of their classes. She also contacted the Daily News, the campus newspaper, and the Digest, the weekly email news that tells students about events happening on campus, about placing an article into the paper and/or in an email to the students to promote the event. After Audrey sent them an email, an advertisement was added in the weekly St. Francis of Assisi student events email. Audrey also sent flyers to St. Mary’s, but were never given a definitive response about if they were hung up or distributed. Audrey e-mailed the presidents of various BSU organizations that may have an interest in literacy such as Education in Action (EIA) and Kappa Delta Pi-Ball State University’s Education organization while Alaina gathered a list of volunteers and race participants from the Ball State Runners’ Association.

The weeks prior to the 5k, we spent time working on all of the details involved in the planning process. Often race participants receive a t-shirt, hat, or at the minimum, a goodie bag for participating in the race. Because we wanted to maximize the proceeds to allow us to donate as many books as possible, while at the same time keeping the entry cost low so students would be more willing to participate, we did not purchase t-shirts. Instead, we passed out coupons for The Artist Within and RoadID, a company that provides free race bibs and flyers for their identification tags that runners can wear, which Alaina had picked up. In addition to these

coupons, each participant was given a flyer Alaina had created with information about why literacy is important and the benefits of reading to young children, “see page xii.” In addition to collecting gently used/new books on the day of the event, Alaina also placed a collection box outside of Dr. Thatcher’s office for anyone wishing to donate that would be unable to attend the event. Audrey walked the course twice prior to race day to determine the exact route and used a distance tracker to ensure the distance was correct. Signs with literacy facts to be posted along the course and registration forms were created by Alaina, in addition to signs Audrey created with arrows to point the racers in the correct direction, “see Figure xiii - xvi.” Raffle tickets were also created by Audrey for the prizes that were collected from the local businesses, “see page xvii.” To show our support for all of the businesses that had contributed to our raffle, Alaina created signs with all of the business’ logos on them and placed them at the registration table and announced the names during the raffle, “see page xviii.”

The week of the race we each received a phone call from the Ball State Daily News wanting to interview us about the race. The article was published the next day, which was perfect timing to advertise for our race, “see page xix.” That week we also met one last time with Mr. Scofield to ensure that everything was in place for a smooth race day. We verified that the Ball State Police had been contacted about our event and that there would be tables on University Green for us to use for registration. He assured us everything was set. The night before the race we picked up the post race apples, bananas, and granola bars that Audrey’s parents had donated and water bottles donated by Marsh for the event. The morning of the event we woke up early and met at University Green at 5:00 am. With duct tape in hand we began walking the course and taping arrows on the sidewalks to mark the course, while also placing the literacy fact signs at various points along the route. Upon finishing the layout of the course, the two of us then began

setting up the finishing shoot we had borrowed from the Ball State Runners' Association.

Anticipating the university would provide tables and chairs as promised, we were a little frantic when there were none to be found. After making a few phone calls we were able to gather a few tables together, which we used for registration, posting the map of the course, "see page xx", and the snacks. We worked quickly and learned to improvise and to make the most of the situation.

During set up and throughout the event photographs were taken of participants, volunteers, and Mrs. Habich, the guest speaker, "see pages xxi – xii." The Daily News came to the event and conducted an interview with Alaina and photographed all of the participants, which was then published in an online article, "see page xxiii." Registration for the race began at 8:00 am, where each participant signed a waiver and was given a race number, "see page xxiv", and the race began promptly at 9:00. Fifteen minutes prior to the start of the race we positioned all of the volunteers at the road intersections where runners could potentially have had to cross in front of traffic. The runners all lined up on the start line and with the shout of the word 'Go' by Audrey they were off. Alaina began the stop watch at the start of the race and Audrey ran to the intersection at Neely and McKinley to watch the intersection for the runners and cheer for them as they passed. While the runners were out on the course, Alaina gathered all the supplies for the raffle, counted up the total number of participants, and was interviewed by the Daily News. As the runners/walkers crossed the finish line Alaina shouted out their time while another volunteer from the Ball State Runners' Association wrote it down. As the participants finished the race, they enjoyed a snack and mingled with one another while waiting for others to complete the race.

Once the final participants crossed the finish line and were gathered together, Laurie Habich from Head Start gave a short speech thanking all of the participants for coming and talked a little about what Head Start is and how important literacy is for young children. Her speech was

followed by the awards where we announced the top male and female participants and presented them with their award, “see page xxv.” After the awards were handed out we raffled off all the donations we had collected. The entire event was finished by 11:00 am. With the help of a few members of the Runners’ Association, the two of us cleaned up the tables and all of the supplies and put them back into Alaina’s car. After all of the registration area was cleaned up, Audrey rode her bike around the course and picked up the signs.

Through our event we were able to raise \$251 and collected forty books. Prior to the race we had discussed where the best place to purchase books would be and Dr. Thatcher told us about the Scholastic Warehouse Sale that is held every year. Inquiring further into this, we registered for the Scholastic Warehouse Sale in Roselle, IL and were excited about a deal where one could pay \$25 and fill a box with as many books as could fit. Talking with a salesperson from the Scholastic Warehouse on the phone we were told that we could easily fit one hundred books into a box. This was perfect, with this type of sale we were easily going to be able to buy enough books to give one to each of the three hundred and five families in the Head Start program. With excitement bubbling high, the two of us drove five hours from Ball State University to St. Charles, IL, which is Audrey’s hometown. After getting a good night’s rest, we headed to the book sale in Roselle, IL and arrived at 9:00 am, only to find that the doors didn’t open until 10:00. After wandering around in an unfamiliar area and walking around in their library while looking for something to do for an hour, we finally just headed back to the warehouse, “see page xxvi.” Once inside we were amazed by all of the books. We headed straight to the section designated for the “pay-per-box” and were disappointed to see the selection. Contrary to what we had been told, the majority of the books were for middle school and high school children. The books that *were* for preschool age children were religious books,

which we decided was not a good choice for a state funded program and we didn't want our purpose for giving the books to the children to be misconstrued with the idea that we were trying to evangelize them. Feeling slightly defeated and frustrated, we headed back out to the car to come up with Plan B. After making a few phone calls to Alaina's mom to get the phone number for the warehouse in Indianapolis, we were able to contact someone at the warehouse in Indianapolis, IN. The salesman Alaina spoke to from the Indianapolis Scholastic Warehouse Sale ensured her that the Indianapolis warehouse was much larger and had a greater selection of books than the one in Roselle. He also stated that there were many different books that were for preschool aged children in the build-a-box section that were not religious-themed. With heightened spirits we headed back to Audrey's house. Shortly after arriving back at the house, Alaina headed home with a slight detour to the Indianapolis warehouse in the route. Alaina arrived at the Indianapolis warehouse shortly after 8:30 pm and was disappointed to find that the selection was even smaller than at the Roselle warehouse. With empty hands Alaina walked out of her second Scholastic warehouse that day.

How were we going to be able to get enough books to give one to each family at Head Start? One option that we looked into was contacting organizations to see if they would donate to our project. Alaina contacted the Psi Iota Alpha chapter and the Lion's Club in Muncie, as well as the We Give Books Pearson Foundation. The organizations that did reply back stated that they had already met their donation limit for the year and encouraged us to check back in a year. Alaina also looked into various foundations, such as the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, that offers grants, but the deadline for these grants had either already passed or were approaching too quickly to fill out all of the proper forms. We considered buying books for the classrooms at Head Start instead of for each individual family because we would not be able to buy enough

new books with the money we had raised. We both received children's book donations from family friends and were reminded of the value in reused books. At this time, we were on break for Christmas, so we each went to our local Goodwill and Savers stores and spent hours flipping through used children's books, all the while with the image of the children from Head Start reading at home with a parent or caregiver in our minds. We continued to maintain a positive attitude and were determined to get enough books to give one to each child. Transporting the hundreds of books we bought and collected from family and friends was an experience, especially when carpooling back to school with other students and all of their belongings. But we did it! We were able to give each family at Head Start one book, "see page xxvii." And, we had money left over! With the remaining money, we purchased books that we donated to A Better Way, a shelter for battered women and their children in Muncie.

With enough books collected to give one to each child at Head Start, we then needed to set up a day and time to deliver the books. Alaina contacted Mrs. Habich and set up a date to discuss how the books should be distributed among the children and when this would be easiest. At this meeting we also interviewed Mrs. Habich for the research portion of our project. After setting up a date and time to deliver the books, we were set to make our final trip out to the Head Start building.

The date to deliver the books was set for Friday, February 15th at 1:30 pm. The weekend prior to delivering the books, we created a flyer to include in the books that contained information on where the book came from, the importance of reading to young children and strategies to use while reading with them, "see page xxviii." Alaina sorted through all of the books and put all of the board books for the very young children together and the books with the paper pages for the older children in another group. We then folded the flyers and placed one in

each book for the parents of the children. On Friday afternoon we drove to the Head Start building and carried all of the bags into Mrs. Habich's office. Once all of the books were in the building, we then delivered the books to the children, "see pages xxix - xxxi." It was so wonderful to see how excited each child became when he/she was given a book. The hours spent collecting money and purchasing books continued giving when we filled out volunteer forms that documented the hours spent on the project, which allowed Head Start to report it and receive more funding for the program. With happiness in our hearts, we left the Head Start facility for the last time for this project, or what we thought was the last time. Upon getting back to campus Alaina realized that we had forgotten two more bags of books in the trunk of the car, so Alaina went back the following Tuesday to deliver them.

When the project all began we talked about including a past, present, and future theme. The past was all of the research done on how literacy impacts children of all ages. The future aspect of the project was giving books to the children in Head Start with the intentions of giving them access to books as young children and improving their literacy. That left the present aspect of our project. We talked with the Head Start program about teaming up with them to host their family reading night, but with a recent change in management they did not feel that they could take on another event at that time. Audrey then contacted Mr. Dubose, the event coordinator at the Anthony/Scheidler Apartments, about hosting a reading day with the children who lived in the apartment complex. Upon meeting with him we learned that if an event such as this were to be successful, we would need to have Charlie Cardinal or one of the Ball State sports teams come and help out at the event. He also suggested that instead of just reading with the kids we also plan other activities and leave the event open for a few hours to allow people to come and go as they wished. We left with a little less enthusiasm than when we went. Audrey sent emails

to the athletic office to see if the basketball team or Charlie Cardinal would come and help us out. After not hearing back from the athletic office and deciding that the reading day seemed like it was going to be a little too much, Audrey contacted Mr. Dubose and apologized because we hadn't heard back from any of the sports teams and we were no longer going to have the reading day. While we knew that we weren't going to be able to host a reading day, we were not quite ready to give up on the idea of reading with the children. Audrey then contacted the Maring-Hunt Library and asked them if we could come in and read with the children that participate in Great Achievers, an after-school program for children needing homework assistance in addition to needing more help in Math and Language. On March 13, 2013 we went to the library at 3:30 and the classroom leader paired us up with different children. We spent the next hour reading with the kids and helping them with their reading homework.

While all three components of our project were complete, we still had money remaining to use to purchase more books. After discussing it amongst the two of us we decided that we wanted to use the remaining money to buy books for A Better Way, which is a not-for-profit agency that provides a place for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence and their children to stay. A Better Way also provides support to anyone facing a crisis through their 24 hour support phone line. The two of us went to Goodwill in Muncie where we spent an hour flipping through books. For this donation we not only purchased children's books, but we also bought adult books because literacy is important for all ages. We were able to purchase 221 books for A Better Way, "see page xxxii". With the last little bit of the money we raised we went to Wal-Mart where we purchased 14 books to donate to the Ball State speech-language pathology and audiology clinic library. Alaina drove to the office of A Better Way and dropped the books off so they could be passed out to the families. With that final drop-off to A Better

Way done, the project was finally complete. Upon completing the final element of our project, we reflected back upon all of the work that we had put into it. We would not have been able to do it without the countless e-mails, text messages, and phone calls to one another and meetings throughout the preparation and execution of our thesis event and research. Throughout the process we learned many different things not only about literacy, but also about ourselves.

Author's Statement: My Personal Reflection

Robert Kiyosaki once said, “The size of your success is measured by the strength of your desire; the size of your dream; and how you handle disappointment along the way.” (ThinkExist, 1999-2013) For me this thesis began as a dream. One can only dream of having the capability to impact hundreds of people’s lives at the same time. I began pursuing the career of a speech-language pathologist with a desire to help others and the goal of positively impacting the life of another. Through my studies my professors instilled in me the knowledge necessary to begin this project. With the collaboration of a good friend we set out to complete a task much larger than the average college student tackles in one Honors Thesis.

I would be lying if I said that the entire process was full of blissful moments. There were frustrations and misunderstandings, exhaustion and feelings of doubt along the way, but in a sense this project wasn’t just about helping the children in the community. This project was also a way for me to build team working skills and leadership abilities, as well as learning more about myself. From the initial meetings where we discussed what our main goals of this project were going to be, I knew this was going to be something that took a lot of time, hard work, and dedication. We met often during the initial brainstorming of our project trying to determine what the best way to raise money was. We created ideas just to throw them out and create new ideas, which was frustrating at times. We would become really excited about one plan, just to come to the conclusion that although that sounded wonderful, in reality it probably wouldn’t work. While the initial planning was challenging and at times seemed hopeless, I learned that persistence was the key to planning any type of event. A successful event doesn’t just begin on its own. It takes hours and hours of brainstorming, collaboration, and occasionally throwing out ideas to come up with better ones. Working on this with Audrey allowed me to learn just that. There were times in

the initial planning that I felt frazzled. It felt as if we were running out of time to plan and host this event, but we helped one another and as a team were able to plan a 5k race fundraiser.

Once we had the plans for our project we began creating a list of businesses to donate to our raffle. I had talked with a student that hosted an event the previous year and she gave me a list of businesses in the Muncie area that were very supportive for her event. This gave me hope and a beginning place for whom to ask for donations. When we set out to talk with the businesses managers and owners I was a little surprised by the vast array of responses we received. In one business we would walk in and the manager would tell us to wait there while he went to get us gift certificates and in other locations we would be told that we should check back in with them in a couple of weeks, all the while knowing by the expression upon their face that there was no reason to go back to that restaurant. Although we did receive some negative responses about donating to our event, it was the positive ones that stuck with me more. The happiness some of the managers and owners expressed when we told them about our cause was priceless. At one business we even had a manager who stated that he didn't usually give to student run events, but because he really liked our idea to buy books for children he would love to donate. Hearing things like that and seeing all of the generosity in the community helps one realize there is still a lot of good in a world that is painted in such a negative manner by news broadcasts.

We spent most of one Sunday handing out the donation request letters and also made a few trips on bicycle throughout the week going to the places we hadn't had time for. When it came time to check back with the businesses it was difficult at times to juggle going to the businesses with my busy class and volunteer schedule. Audrey and I tried to revisit as many businesses together as possible, but this was more difficult because then we had to try to account

for two busy class schedules and volunteer schedules on top of all of our other extracurricular activities. We did as much as we could together and then divided the remainder between the two of us. This was one of the many instances throughout the project that I learned the value of teamwork and the importance of being able to trust my partner to do her part. We would not have been able to reach out to and receive as many donations from local businesses without dividing up the responsibilities and working together as a team.

The events leading up to and on the day of the race were quite hectic. We spent hours that week ensuring that everything was in place for race day. I created lists of things I didn't want to forget, things that needed to be done prior to the day of the event, and things that needed to be done on the day of the race. The two of us spent a few hours the day before the race going over who was bringing what to the event and making sure that we didn't forget anything.

On the day of the race we met at 5:00 in the morning to walk the course and set things up. When we got to University Green I was a little worried when I realized there were no tables for us to put the registration materials on. I told Audrey that we could walk the course and maybe they were still planning to deliver them. In the back of my mind I knew that this probably wouldn't happen, but I was trying to help calm her down. We walked the entire course and put all of the signs down. When we returned to the start/finish area we set up the finishing shoot. I was still a little worried about how we were going to set up the registration without a table, but I tried to remain calm and make the best of what we had available. After making a few calls I was able to find three tables to borrow for the race. Once the tables arrived we frantically set everything up and finished just as the racers began to arrive. I was so happy to see all of my friends, professors, family members, and fellow Run Club members there to support me and the children of the Head Start program. The race went smoothly and the participants all enjoyed the

snacks available once they were finished. Mrs. Habich, the representative from Head Start, came forward to talk about what Head Start is and the services they provide to children and their families. Mrs. Habich did a wonderful job explaining that Head Start provides low socioeconomic families with services ranging from nutrition awareness to social work to providing educational activities for the children in the program. One interesting fact she stated was that the number of prison beds was determined based on the average reading level of the third graders in the area. The participants were very attentive while Laurie was speaking and seemed very surprised when she talked about how the number of prison beds was determined. After the awards and prizes were given out I had many people approach me and tell me that they really enjoyed learning more about Head Start and they said that they had no idea that literacy could have that large of an impact on so many things. The gratification felt knowing that not only did we raise money to purchase books, but we also taught the participants more about the importance of literacy was indescribable. I walked away that day knowing that if nothing else I made a few people more aware of the importance of literacy and hopefully the message they received impacted them enough that they will want to share their new information with others.

While it felt as if the hardest part of the entire project was complete, there was still much ahead of us. Dr. Thatcher, our supervisor, gave us the idea to try looking at the Scholastic Warehouse Sale to buy books at a discounted price. Audrey told me that there was a book sale close to her home town the week of finals and since neither one of us had finals that week I told her that I could drive her home and then the two of us could go together. It sounded like a wonderful idea and we were so excited about purchasing enough books to be able to give one to each child. When we walked into the warehouse to get the books my excitement grew even more. There were shelves upon shelves of books everywhere. The woman at the entrance pointed

us in the right direction. I was a little disappointed when we found the build-a-box section. The boxes were much smaller than what I had imagined and the section also felt tiny compared to the remainder of the warehouse. Feeling a little less enthusiastic, I began looking on the shelves and tables at the books available. The more shelves I looked on, the more my enthusiasm dropped. I began to feel a little worried when we couldn't find any books for the age range we were looking for. After talking with the workers, my hopes sank even more. We looked in the remainder of warehouse to see if we would still be able to make our goal of purchasing one book for each child. It began to feel hopeless when each book was still at least six or seven dollars after the 50% discount. We left feeling crushed and unsure that we would be able to meet our goal. Once we got back into the car I called my mom and she gave me the number to the Indianapolis warehouse. Upon calling that location my spirits were heightened and I felt that there was still a way to make our goal a reality. The trip to Audrey's house from school was five hours. The trip to the book sale was thirty minutes one way, and almost immediately after returning to her house from the warehouse I set off for home. I stopped in Indianapolis on the way and with less excitement than earlier in the day when I walked in to purchase the books for our project. All of the hope remaining in me left as soon as I saw the miniscule selection of books in this build-a-box section. With very low spirits and high exhaustion levels I got back into my car and finished the last two hours of my five hour drive home.

After the upsetting experience of having no luck at the book sale, I began thinking that maybe we had set our goal a little too high. I wasn't quite ready to give up, but my hopes were sinking by the day. I then began to think about other options that would allow us to purchase a book for each child. I looked into grants and organizations that may be willing to donate, but didn't have any luck. After receiving a large donation of books from a family friend, I thought it

may be possible to reach our goal if we purchase used books. Audrey and I discussed the options available and decided to go to our local thrift stores to find books. My mom and I spent hours looking through books at our local Goodwill stores and between what I was able to purchase and what Audrey found, we were able to gather more books than we needed! It was so exciting knowing we were able to reach our goal and that each child would have the opportunity to have a book to take home and read over and over with his/her caregiver.

Delivering the books to the children at the Head Start building made all of the hours planning, all of the late nights working on the event, all of the driving and contacting businesses worth it. I will never forget the smiles on their faces when they received their own book to keep. Or the little boy who placed his book on the bookshelf in the classroom because he didn't realize he got to take the book home and keep it. In another classroom there was a little boy sitting in the teacher's lap, rocking back-and-forth sobbing. When we walked in he continued to cry louder and louder by the minute. When I handed him his book he stopped crying and just stared at me. He then became much happier and by the time we left the classroom he was hiding behind the bookshelf and popping out at us. It was also a wonderful feeling to be able to give a child who lives in a Spanish-speaking home a book written in Spanish.

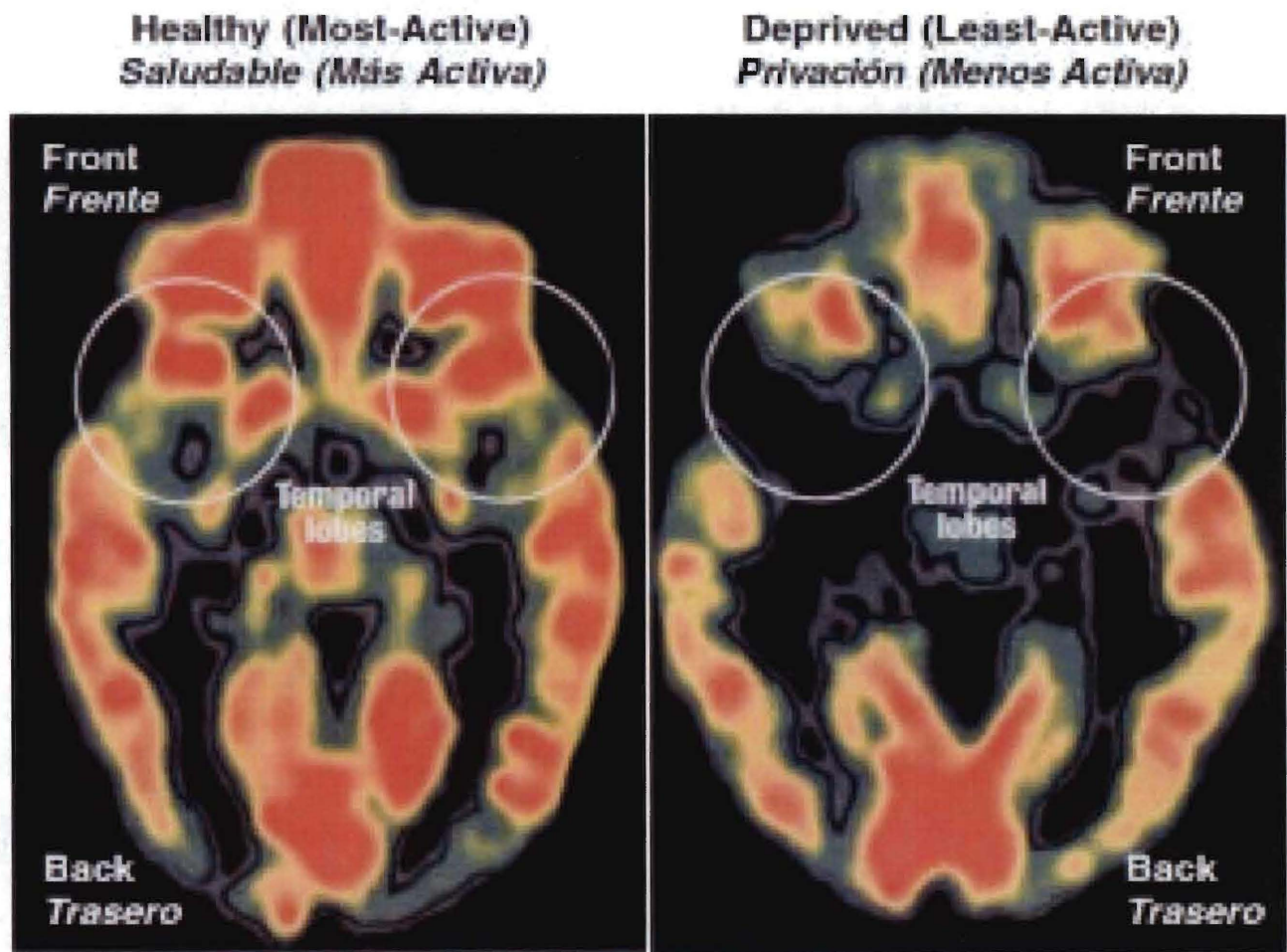
After giving the children at the Head Start program a book to take home and share with their families, I couldn't help but become even more excited that we were going to be able to donate books to another organization with the money we had remaining. While flipping through the books at Goodwill, I couldn't help but imagine that the children at A Better Way would be just as excited as the children at Head Start to receive a book. Knowing that we were going to be able to give books to another organization was amazing to me. I couldn't believe that just a few months prior we had worried about being able to get enough books for the children at Head Start

and now we had enough to give to A Better Way as well. When delivering the books to A Better Way, I scheduled a time to meet them and give them the books to take to the shelter. While getting the books out of the car, a family was waiting for their child to get off the bus. The women from A Better Way invited them over to pick out a few books to take home to read with their children. The parents were so excited that they were going to be able to take the books home with them. Seeing how excited they became really warmed my heart and helped me see how much this project really meant to the people we were able to help. It is such a wonderful feeling to watch the eyes of both the parents and the child light up when they are given the gift of books. This had greatly exceeded my expectations of what we could achieve with this project. If someone would have told me last spring that in less than one year I, with the help of Audrey of course, would be able to donate books to two different organizations and the Ball State speech clinic, I probably would have laughed in disbelief. We had far outdone either one of our expectations, and for that reason I believe that this thesis was a success. I believe that we were successful because like Robert Kiyosaki said, we were successful because we had a strong desire to inform the community of the importance of literacy, we were successful because we took each disappointment along the way one step at a time and made the best of each situation.

While our thesis project was successful, there are still things looking back that I would do differently if I did it over again. If I could go back I would have tried to get more of the student body involved in the race. The group we had at our race was a lot of fun, but it would have been nice to see more people out there to spread the word about the importance of literacy even further. To make the event bigger I would have tried to advertise more to the Greek life on campus and tried to get the local radio station involved to announce it to the community. Another thing I would have done differently to increase participation is to host the event earlier in the fall

semester when it was warmer outside. I know there were people who did not participate because the weather was pretty chilly since the race was held in December, changing the date to be earlier in the year may have helped.

Not only was it rewarding to give the books to the children and see their smiling faces as they looked through their new books, but I learned a lot about myself and teamwork over the course of the project. Working as a team taught me the value of designating certain tasks to each person. We had to collaborate with one another and decide who would do what so that we both didn't end up doing the same thing and wasting time. Working as a team also reminded me of the importance of trust. As someone who likes to be independent on projects, I had to trust that Audrey was going to do her part and do it well and continue to do just my share of the work. I knew she would never let me down because we have a very similar work ethic, but sometimes I still needed to remind myself to trust it would all get done. The most important thing that I learned with regards to teamwork was communication. There were many times, especially toward the end of the project where communication broke-down and then misunderstanding led to disagreements. While there were times when we didn't agree on how things should be done, we took time to think things through and eventually work things out. The process of planning and executing our plan helped me to build upon my leadership skills, while at the same time improving upon my ability to effectively work with team members on a project. While these skills will help me in my career, I feel that the most important thing I learned throughout this entire project was the value of giving. Growing up surrounded by books, one can easily forget just how valued one book can be. Seeing the impact made upon the lives of the children in Delaware County reminded me just how much the gift of books can mean to someone.



Alaina Hartman
Audrey Van Acker
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Karen Thatcher
April 27, 2012

Honors Thesis Project Proposal

As speech-language pathology majors, we have learned about the importance of developing early literacy skills. We want to learn more about early literacy skills and want to use what we have learned to impact the community. Our project will be composed of two parts: 1) research on the importance of pre-literacy and literacy skills with particular focus on Delaware County and 2) application of our findings through "Family Night," a reading night at the Kennedy Library and a 5K run/walk fundraiser from which the proceeds will fund books that will be distributed to families at Head Start¹. Our authors' statement will include our research findings and a reflection on the outcomes of "Family Night" and the 5K run/walk fundraiser.

Through our research, we will gain a better understanding of the efficacy of developing literacy skills. We will interact with young children and apply our learned knowledge at "Family Night" through educating parents on the importance of reading with their children. This is the application of our research "today." The distribution of books at Head Start of Delaware County will continue our application into the future. Our goals of learning more about a topic that applies directly to our major and applying our knowledge will be reached. We will also build upon our leadership skills as we plan, advertise, and carry out "Family Night" and the 5K run/walk fundraiser.

The goal of this project is to impact children aged six weeks to five years who are living in Delaware County. This will be done by educating and bringing awareness of the importance of early literacy development to their parents/guardians as well as the community.

¹ Head Start of Delaware County provides families with resources to enhance early child Development.



CERTIFICATE OF LIABILITY INSURANCE

DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)
11/28/2012

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INSURED Ball State University 2000 West University Ave. Muncie, IN 47306	INSURER(S) AFFORDING COVERAGE INSURER A: LEXINGTON INS CO NAIC # 19437 INSURER B: INSURER C: INSURER D: INSURER E: INSURER F:

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CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 30412199

REVISION NUMBER:

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INSURANCE TYPE	POLICY NUMBER	POLICY EFF. DATE	POLICY EXP. DATE	LIMITS
GENERAL LIABILITY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL GENERAL LIABILITY <input type="checkbox"/> CLAIMS-MADE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUR GEN'L AGGREGATE LIMIT APPLIES PER: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLICY <input type="checkbox"/> PRO-JECT <input type="checkbox"/> LOC	37205392	11/01/12	11/01/13	EACH OCCURRENCE \$ 1,000,000 DAMAGE TO RENTED PREMISES (EA OCCURRENCE) \$ 300,000 MED EXP (Any one person) \$ 0 PERSONAL & ADV INJURY \$ 1,000,000 GENERAL AGGREGATE \$ 3,000,000 PRODUCTS - COMPROP AGG \$ 3,000,000
AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY <input type="checkbox"/> ANY AUTO <input type="checkbox"/> ALL OWNED AUTOS <input type="checkbox"/> HIRED AUTOS <input type="checkbox"/> SCHEDULED AUTOS <input type="checkbox"/> NON-OWNED AUTOS				COMBINED SINGLE LIMIT (EA ACCIDENT) \$ BODILY INJURY (Per person) \$ BODILY INJURY (Per accident) \$ PROPERTY DAMAGE (Per accident) \$
UMBRELLA LIAB <input type="checkbox"/> EXCESS LIAB <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUR <input type="checkbox"/> CLAIMS-MADE DED RETENTION \$				EACH OCCURRENCE \$ AGGREGATE \$
WORKERS COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY ANY PROPRIETOR/PARTNER/EXECUTIVE OFFICER/ MEMBER EXCLUDED? (Mandatory in IN) If yes, describe under DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS below	N/A			WC STATUTORY LIMITS \$ DISEASE \$ E.L. EACH ACCIDENT \$ E.L. DISEASE - EA EMPLOYEE \$ E.L. DISEASE - POLICY LIMIT \$

DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS / LOCATIONS / VEHICLES (Attach ACORD 101, Additional Remarks Schedule, if more space is required)

Evidence of coverage for all Ball State University sponsored activities involving the closing of the City of Muncie streets on the Ball State University campus during the term of the insurance policy.

CERTIFICATE HOLDER

City of Muncie
300 North High Street
Muncie, IN 47305

USA

CANCELLATION

SHOULD ANY OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLICIES BE CANCELLED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE THEREOF, NOTICE WILL BE DELIVERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLICY PROVISIONS.

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

[Signature]

ACORD 25 (2010/05)
gaganhighered
30412199

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Registration on Race Day Only



RACE AWARDS AND RAFFLE INCLUDED!!!

5K

**Run/Walk
Fundraiser
ONLY \$5.00!!!**

SATURDAY

DECEMBER 1st

8:00 a.m. Check in
at University Green on
Ball State Campus
9:00 a.m. Start

BABY STEPS

LITERACY MATTERS.

SUPPORT THE YOUNG OF OUR COMMUNITY.

PROCEEDS FROM THE BABY STEPS 5K RUN/WALK WILL BE USED TO PURCHASE BOOKS THAT WILL BE DONATED TO HEAD START OF DELAWARE COUNTY, A PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES "EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPIES AND SERVICES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS AGE BIRTH TO THREE YEARS." THESE BOOKS ARE MERELY A START, THE INITIAL BABY STEPS TO IMPROVING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN DELAWARE COUNTY AND THEREFORE ENHANCING THE COMMUNITY ONE STEP AT A TIME...NOT TO MENTION IT'S ALSO ONE STEP CLOSER TO A HEALTHIER YOU!

GENTLY USED AND/OR NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK DONATIONS ACCEPTED!!!

Questions? E-mail us at babysteps5k@gmail.com

November 19, 2012

Hello! We are Alaina and Audrey, senior Honors students at Ball State University studying Speech-Language Pathology. For our Honors Thesis, we are researching the importance of literacy skills in children and are specifically focusing on the youth in Delaware County. Through our studies, experience, and research, we have learned about the importance of early literacy skills in children. With the help of others, we are planning Baby Steps, a 5K run/walk, from which the proceeds will be used to purchase books. The books will be donated to Head Start to create a library for the families there so they will be able to read with their children. Our hope is that this will encourage the parents and give them an opportunity to foster literacy skills in their children. The donated books are merely a start, the initial baby steps, to improving the development of children in Delaware County and therefore enhancing the community one step at a time.

We would like to ask for a donation for our event.

Baby Steps will be on Saturday, December 1st, 2012. A more accurate estimate of attendees will be available closer to the event, but we expect about 50 participants. We would appreciate a donation for this event.

Please contact us at **babysteps5k@gmail.com** if you have any questions.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alaina Hartman and Audrey Van Acker



Table at the Atrium to promote the race.

BABY STEPS 5K

5k Run/Walk

WHO: YOU!

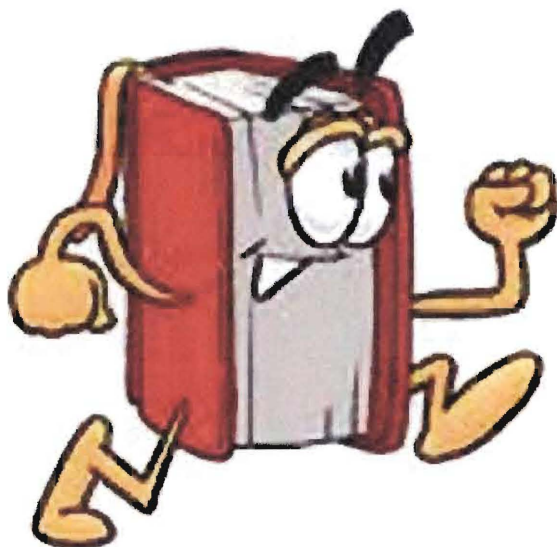
WHAT: 5k Run/Walk

WHEN: Saturday, December 1st

WHERE: University Green, Ball State University

Register on race day only at 8:00 a.m.

Race begins at 9:00 a.m.



COST: \$5.00

WHY: To help the children of our community by raising money to buy books to build a library for Head Start of Delaware County!

Children's books donations are welcome!

BABY STEPS 5K

Contact us as:
babysteps5k@gmail.com

Head Start of Delaware County

General Information

Began in Muncie in 1967

Since its beginning, approximately **6,000 children** have benefitted from their services.

Head Start serves preschool age children from low-income families in addition to children with special needs.

The purpose of the program is to help parents learn how to get their children ready for school as well as enhancing the intellectual, physical, emotional and social development of young children.



Statistics

Head Start children are significantly more likely to complete high school and attend college than their siblings who did not attend Head Start.

A higher proportion of Head Start parents read to their children more frequently than those parents of children who were not enrolled in Head Start.

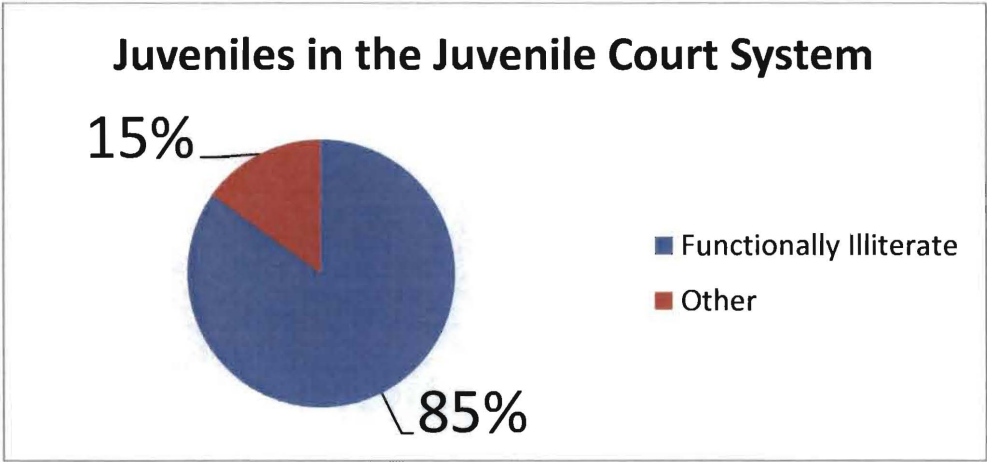
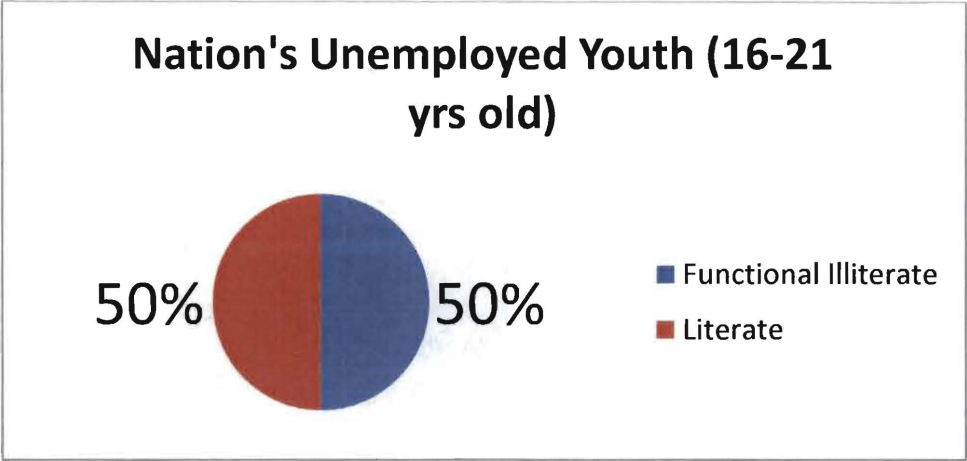
Head Start children are significantly less likely to have been charged with a crime than their siblings who did not participate in Head Start.

Children in Head Start programs receive significantly more health care screenings than their non-Head Start peers.

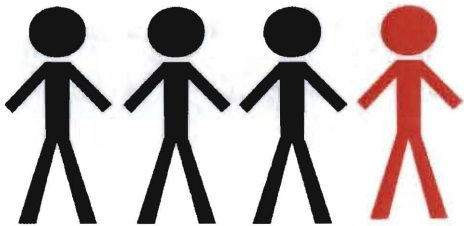
(2009-2010). Retrieved from Head Start of Delaware County: <http://www.headstartmuncie.org/index.php>

(2012). Retrieved from National Head Start Association: <http://www.nhsa.org/>

Graphs and Statistics used on our poster in the Atrium to promote the race.




Low literary costs \$73 million per year in terms of direct health care costs.



3 out of 4 food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels.



Benefits of Reading to Children

- 
- **Stronger parent-child relationship**
 - **Experiencing reading as a fun activity**
 - **Better concentration and discipline**
 - **Understanding new experiences**
 - **Increased logical thinking abilities**
 - **Getting an introduction to language use**
 - **Learning how to read a book and developing other literacy skills**
 - **Improved expressive language and communication skills**
 - **Improved academic abilities**

Who: YOU!

What: 5K Run/Walk Fundraiser

When: Saturday, December 1st

Register on race day only at 8:00 a.m.

Race begins at 9:00 a.m.

Cost: \$5.00

Where: University Green, Ball State University

Why: To help the children of
our community by raising money to buy books
to build a library for Head Start of Delaware County!



Children's books donations are welcome!

Literacy

Why is literacy important?

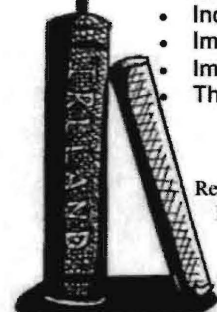
- 88% of poor readers in first grade are likely to be poor readers in fourth grade, and if not assisted before age nine, 75% of these poor readers, will have reading difficulties in high school.
- 10% to 15% of children who have difficulties learning to read will drop out of school.
- 50% of the adolescents and young adults that have a criminal record and 50% of the youth with a substance abuse record have reading trouble.
- 3 out of 4 food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels.

Benefits of reading to young children:

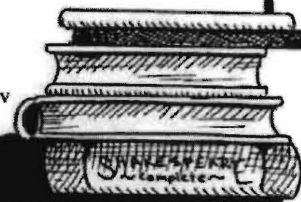
- Stronger parent-child relationship
- Better concentration and discipline
- Increased logical thinking abilities
- Improved communication skills
- Improved academic abilities
- The foundation of all learning in school is reading

Resources:

Helping your child read. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.michigan.gov>



Nikki O'Shea 2008



3 out of 4 food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels.



Low literacy costs \$73 million per year in terms of direct health care costs.



10% to 15% of children who have difficulties learning to read will drop out of school.

Only 2% of children who have difficulties learning to read complete a four-year college program.

More than 20% of adults read at or below a fifth-grade level – far below the level needed to earn a living wage.

In 2003 in Delaware Co.

8%

were lacking basic prose literacy skills. (~7,208 people)

Reading with young children improves expressive language and communication skills.

Reading with young children improves their academic abilities.

Reading with young children improves logical thinking skills.

Reading with young children enhances the child's concentration and discipline.

Reading with young children builds listening, vocabulary, and memory skills.

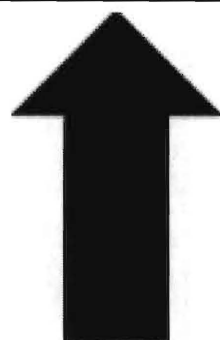
Reading with young children helps to develop their imagination.

Reading with young children helps build a stronger parent–child relationship.

Reading with young children is important because reading is the basis for all learning.

Reading with young children helps to build their vocabulary.

BABY STEPS 5K



BABY STEPS 5K

**1 MILE
DONE!!!**

... 2.1 TO GO 😊

**2 MILES
DONE!!!**

... OVER HALF-WAY! 😊

**3 MILES
DONE!!!**

... ALMOST THERE! 😊

BABY STEPS 5K



Raffle Prizes Include:

- Free IHOP entrees
- Free PIZZA HUT pizzas
- \$5.00 gift certificate to MANCINO'S
- \$20.00 gift certificate to T.I.S. Bookstore
- Free PAPA MURPHY'S pizza
- Free RUBY TUESDAY appetizers
- Free PITA PIT pitas
- Free admission tickets to BSU basketball games
- \$75.00 gift certificate for class at CORNERSTONE
CENTER FOR THE ARTS
- \$45.00 gift certificate to OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE
- \$15.00 gift certificate to AMAZING JOE'S
- \$10.00 gift certificates to TEXAS ROADHOUSE
- Water bottles from Kirk's Bike Shop
- "Party Pizza Special" Certificate (Includes 5 large pizzas -
\$29.99 value) from COUSIN VINNY'S
- "Big Ten" Pizza Certificates (\$11.99 value/each) from
COUSIN VINNY'S
- Free sub sandwiches from JIMMY JOHN'S

MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN!!!

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY ON YOUR RAFFLE TICKETS!

Raffle Prizes

There will be a raffle after the race where we will be giving out prizes from the following businesses:



Baby steps 5k

Contact us as:
babysteps5k@gmail.com

STUDENT-CREATED CHARITY EVENT WILL HELP BENEFIT LOCAL CHILDREN

Baby Steps event
to collect donations,
books on campus

ERIN CLARK STAFF REPORTER
enclark2@bsu.edu

Two speech-language pathology majors paired up to plan the first Baby Steps 5K Run and Walk.

The event will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday on University Green with pre-registration beginning at 8 a.m.

The 5K was created by seniors Audrey Van Acker and Alaina Hartman as an honors thesis project.

The event, which costs \$5 to participate, will help buy books, which in turn will help build a library for the Head Start program in Delaware County.

According to the Head Start website, the organization "serves preschool age chil-

dren from low-income families, as well as children with special needs."

The organization currently provides assistance to approximately 180 children.

After taking several speech-language classes, Van Acker and Hartman developed the idea to help out the organization.

"We have a lot of different classes that talked about literacy and in our classes, we talked about Head Start," Hartman said.

Van Acker and Hartman spent time in their classes researching the significance of pre-literacy and hope to enlighten those who attend their event of the importance of early education.

"In order for a kid to learn in school, they need to have basic literacy skills," Hartman said. "They need to be able to read for all subjects in school. By providing students with literacy help, you are ultimately helping the student

out in their long-term life."

The two said they are hoping to have anywhere from 30 to 50 people show up for the event. They want to have enough people donate money and books so they can build a small library.

"The more books the best, but we aren't really anticipating a certain amount," Hartman said.

A raffle also will be at the event. People can win prizes such as free entrees and appetizers, gift certificates, free art classes and

even tickets to Ball State basketball games.

While the 5K event is scheduled for this weekend, there are more events that are scheduled for the future.

"We are hoping to get [some more books] from the sales after Christmas," Van Acker said.

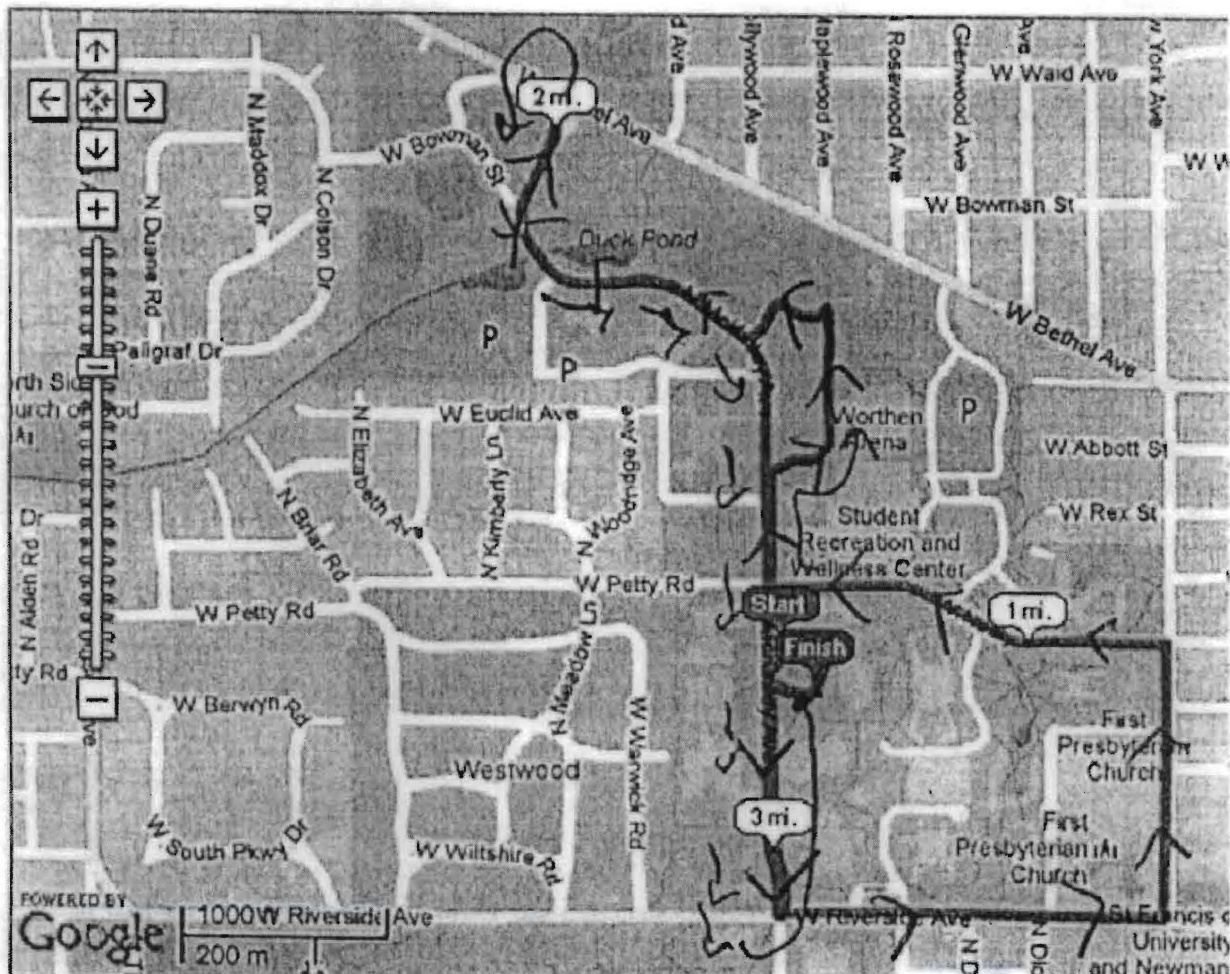
Because of the delay, they will donate the books next semester.

"We really want all of the work that we've put into [this event] to pay out for the kids in Delaware County," Hartman said.

Alaina and Audrey were both interviewed via phone calls on Wednesday, November 28th and the above article was published in the Ball State University newspaper, *The Daily News*, on Thursday, November 29th, 2012.

Route Directions:

1. Head south on McKinley Ave.
2. Turn LEFT onto Riverside Ave.
3. Turn LEFT onto New York Ave.
4. Turn LEFT onto Neely Ave.
5. Cross the street as you turn RIGHT onto McKinley Ave.
6. Turn RIGHT onto the sidewalk heading towards Worthen Arena.
7. Follow the sidewalk back to McKinley Ave.
8. Cross the street as you turn RIGHT onto McKinely Ave.
9. Circle around the light post just before you reach Bethel Ave.
10. Follow the sidewalk back down McKinley Ave (south).
11. Cross the street at (the scramble light) Riverside Ave. and turn left, heading back up McKinley (north).
12. Turn RIGHT after the library, pass Frog Baby, and follow the markers to the chute!



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